

business goes bust isn't necessarily frowned upon."

Unfortunately, the administration has so far gotten the press to focus on the least important question about Mr. Bush's business dealings: his failure to obey the law by promptly reporting his insider stock sales. It's true that Mr. Bush's story about that failure has suddenly changed, from "the dog ate my homework" to "my lawyer ate my homework—four times." But the administration hopes that a narrow focus on the reporting lapses will divert attention from the larger point: Mr. Bush profited personally from aggressive accounting identical to the recent scams that have shocked the nation.

In 1986, one would have had to consider Mr. Bush a failed businessman. He had run through millions of dollars of other people's money, with nothing to show for it but a company losing money and heavily burdened with debt. But he was rescued from failure when Harken Energy bought his company at an astonishingly high price. There is no question that Harken was basically paying for Mr. Bush's connections.

Despite these connections, Harken did badly. But for a time it concealed its failure—sustaining its stock price, as it turned out, just long enough for Mr. Bush to sell most of his stake at a large profit—with an accounting trick identical to one of the main ploys used by Enron a decade later. (Yes, Arthur Andersen was the accountant.) As I explained in my previous column, the ploy works as follows: corporate insiders create a front organization that seems independent but is really under their control. This front buys some of the firm's assets at unrealistically high prices, creating a phantom profit that inflates the stock price, allowing the executives to cash in their stock.

That's exactly what happened at Harken. A group of insiders, using money borrowed from Harken itself, paid an exorbitant price for a Harken subsidiary, Aloha Petroleum. That created a \$10 million phantom profit, which hid three-quarters of the company's losses in 1989. White House aides have played down the significance of this maneuver, saying \$10 million isn't much, compared with recent scandals. Indeed, it's a small fraction of the apparent profits Halliburton created through a sudden change in accounting procedures during Dick Cheney's tenure as chief executive. But for Harken's stock price—and hence for Mr. Bush's personal wealth—this accounting trickery made all the difference.

Oh, the Harken's fake profits were several dozen times as large as the Whitewater land deal—though only about one-seventh the cost of the Whitewater investigation.

Mr. Bush was on the company's audit committee, as well as on a special restructuring committee; back in 1994, another member of both committees, E. Stuart Watson, assured reporters that he and Mr. Bush were constantly made aware of the company's finances. If Mr. Bush didn't know about the Aloha maneuver, he was a very negligent director.

In any case, Mr. Bush certainly found out what his company had been up to when the Securities and Exchange Commission ordered it to restate its earnings. So he can't really be shocked over recent corporate scams. His own company pulled exactly the same tricks, to the considerable benefit. Of course, what really made Mr. Bush a rich man was the investment of his proceeds from Harken in the Texas Rangers—a step that is another, equally strange story.

The point is the contrast between image and reality. Mr. Bush portrays himself as a regular guy, someone ordinary Americans can identify with. But his personal fortune was built on privilege and insider dealings—and after his Harken sale, on large-scale corporate welfare. Some people have it easy.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. After listening to several 5-minute special order speeches, the Chair would remind all Members that, although remarks in debate may include criticism of the President on matters of policy or politics, remarks in debate may not descend to personalities by alluding to unethical behavior on the part of the President.

FOX GUARDING THE CHICKEN COOP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. LEWIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I come to the floor tonight dismayed, disillusioned and disappointed. What is happening in corporate America? What has become of our corporate leaders? This is a simple issue of right and wrong, good and evil, how fraud, lying and cheating have become part of our corporate culture. We must ask ourselves, How did this happen? What gave birth to this period of corporate greed and scandal?

It all started with the corporate crusade against big government. Big government was making big business file too many reports. Big government was spending too much time making sure that big business was following the law, so big business asked their friends in Congress to do something about it.

Thanks to Republican attacks against big government, these CEOs and board of directors are acting with little, if any, government regulation. They have been lying to investors, lying to workers, and lying to the Federal Government. And they have been getting away with it.

While corporate America has been making out like bandits, hard-working men and women are losing their jobs, their retirement, and losing their children's college funds. The majority party in the White House has created a climate in which Enron, WorldCom, and Tyco could happen. Instead of having the SEC look over corporate books, Republicans have had the SEC look the other way.

My colleagues, so shall thee sow, so shall thee reap.

But this travesty is not just about Global Crossing, WorldCom, Enron, Martha Stewart, Tyco, and Merck. In fact, it is not just about the world of business. It is bigger than that.

Look at the Republican environmental record. Look at their record on worker safety. Our Interior Department is fighting tooth and nail to drill for oil and dig for coal on our pristine public lands. The EPA is leading the fight for more air pollution. OSHA is making fewer and fewer trips to the workplace. And the SEC has been leading the fight to let business just go about its business.

Time and time again, Republicans have declared that the only regulation is self-regulation or no regulation. Even today, President Bush declared that we must "depend on the conscience of American business leaders."

Republicans have left the fox in charge of the chicken coop; and now they are shocked, they are absolutely shocked to find a fat fox and an empty chicken coop.

Mr. President, actions speak louder than words. Today's moral indignation rings as falsely as an Enron accounting report.

Today, President Bush told the American people that he wanted to hire 100 new staffers at the SEC to make corporations obey the law. President Bush did not tell the American people that just last year he proposed getting rid of 57 SEC workers. This is what the Republicans were doing before the American people started paying attention. This is what the Republicans were doing when no one was watching.

We do not need strong words and empty promises. We need strong regulation and strict enforcement. It is time to get tough on crime, all crime, and not just the folks who cannot afford to make a campaign contribution.

When someone gets caught dealing a thousand dollars' worth of drugs, they lock you up, lock you away, and take almost everything you own. We need the same standards for CEOs who steal millions of dollars from their companies. We need the same standards for corporate leaders who lie, cheat and steal from their employees and their shareholders.

Mr. Speaker, it is time to get serious about corporate crime. It is time to put some teeth back into securities laws and some power back into the SEC. Do not just talk the talk; walk the walk. Pass the laws. Protect the folks who are being dumped on and ripped off. We owe our people no less. It is our mission, our mandate, and our moral obligation, our moral responsibility.

HAS CAPITALISM FAILED AGAIN?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. PAUL. Mr. Speaker, the question I want to address today is: Has capitalism failed again?

It is now commonplace and politically correct to blame what is referred to as the excesses of capitalism for the economic problems that we face, and especially for the Wall Street fraud that dominates the business news. Politicians are having a field day demagoguing the issue while, of course, failing to address the fraud and deceit found in the budgetary shenanigans of the Federal Government for which they are directly responsible. Instead, it gives the Keynesian crowd that runs